

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE CORPS CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS SCHOOL
WEAPONS TRAINING BATTALION
TRAINING COMMAND
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STUDENT OUTLINE

MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

CAC-PLAN-203

CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS PLANNER COURSE

M020AQD

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

a. **Terminal Learning Objectives**. Given a mission, commander's intent, CPB planning support products and as a member of a Civil-Military Operations Working Group, integrate Civil-Military considerations into the planning process, to support the commander's decision making by providing an understanding of the civil environment and the nature of the problem in order to identify an appropriate solution, in accordance with MCWP 3-33.1. (CACT-PLAN-2001)

b. **Enabling Learning Objectives**

(1) Without the aid of references, define the Marine Corps Planning Process, in accordance with MCWP 5-1, Ch 1. (CAC-PLAN-2001a)

(2) Without the aid of references, define Design, in accordance with MCWP 5-1, Ch 1. (CAC-PLAN-2001b)

(3) Without the aid of references, define the tenets of the Marine Corps Planning Process, in accordance with MCWP 5-1, Ch 1. (CAC-PLAN-2001c)

1. Marine Corps Planning Process (MCP)

a. Purpose. MCP is staff level planning designed to promote an understanding among the commander, his staff, and subordinate commanders regarding the nature of a given problem and the options for solving it. The Marine Corps subscribes to two types of planning; deliberate and rapid or crisis. The planning process provides commanders and staffs at all levels a means to organize their planning activities. Time is the distinguishing factor between the two planning types.

b. Planning Doctrine. The Marine Corps Planning Process supports our warfighting philosophy of "maneuver warfare" which allows Marines to exploit the advantages of focus, speed, shock, tempo, and surprise. Planning is also an essential part of command and control and it enhances the commander's ability to make sound and timely decisions.

(1) Since war is a competition in time, creating tempo (speed over time) is important to every battlespace commander.

(2) Effective planning accelerates tempo by anticipating actions and reactions, enhancing the commander's decision making ability.

(3) Conflict may be viewed as a series of time and space competitions won through effective decision making cycles. Boyd's Observe, Orient, Decide, Act (OODA) Loop is an example of a decision making process used to assist decision makers:

(a) Observe. Know yourself, your surroundings, and the adversary (conducting civil preparation of the battlespace).

(b) Orient. The emphasis is placed on assessing (mental images or snapshots) the area of operation. This assessment is viewed as the most critical step in the process. Whereby a commander synthesizes available information regarding the operational environment and determines the relevant information in order to make an informed and timely decision to devise a practical solution.

(c) Decide. A commander considers the relevant information in choosing the necessary actions required to solve the given problem.

(d) Act. Direction given to execute the Commander's decision.

(4) The Commander who goes through the cycle the fastest achieves the advantage and subsequently the cycle starts again.

(5) How do we speed up the OODA loop? Through Planning.

c. **Planning Philosophy.** Planning is the essence of forming or framing the problem, developing a hypothesis to solve the problem, testing the hypothesis, deciding on the right solution, then executing the decision.

(1) Planning increases our situational awareness - as the planners' situational awareness improves so too does their understanding to recognize the essence of a given problem and the creativity to develop practical solutions. Therefore, decision makers go from learning to knowledge to understanding. Understanding enhances the commander's ability to make sound and timely decisive actions.

(2) Design is a way of organizing conceptual work within an organization to assist commanders in understanding the operational environment.

(3) Design is the conception and articulation of a framework for solving a problem. The goal of design is to effectively and efficiently identify the root cause(s) of complex problems or unfamiliar situations. Design leads to an actionable operational approach that provides guidance for detailed planning and execution. While not prescriptive, design is based on: critical thinking; conceptual planning; visualization; emergence of a hypothesis; and continuous activity. Design occurs throughout the planning-execution-assessment continuum.

d. **Tenets of the Marine Corps Planning Process.** These tenets guide the commander's use of his staff to plan and execute military operations.

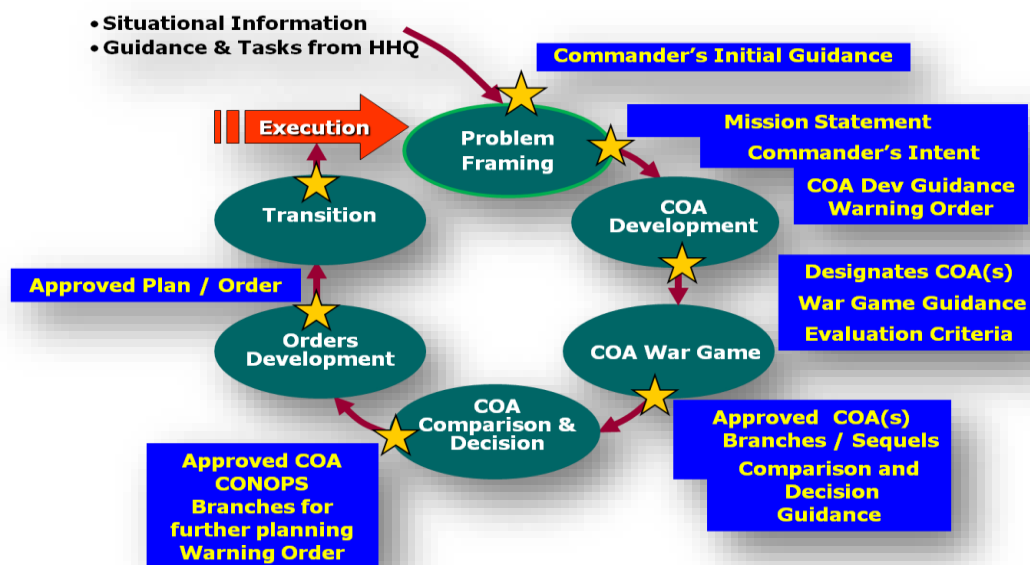
(1) **Top-Down Planning.** Planning is a fundamental responsibility of command. A Commander driven process; this principle emphasizes the importance of the commander's involvement throughout the planning process. The key to effective planning is the Commander's guidance and or direction during each step of the planning process. Although the commander drives the process, it requires support from others. The goal of the staff and OPT/Working Group is to aid the commander's effective decision making.

(2) Single Battle Concept. Conceptually the battlespace can be divided spatially into three parts: deep, close and rear. Operations and or events in one part of the battlespace often have profound and unintended effects in other areas and events. Therefore, a commander must always view the battlespace as an indivisible entity. Everyone involved must bear in mind that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. By providing the big picture to subordinate units, they can exercise judgment and initiative when the unforeseen occurs, while remaining consistent with the commander's intent (the commander's expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired end state).

(3) Integrated Planning. Integrated planning is the coordinated action toward a common purpose by all elements of the force. The intent of integrated planning is the sharing of information across the warfighting functions and support organizations to achieve a common goal. Essential to this planning principle is the assignment of personnel with an appropriate level of knowledge in their respective organization or functional area on the OPT/working group. The concept is based on the assumption that the experience of a group of functional experts will lead to a better plan than a commander can develop on his own.

2. THE SIX STEPS OF THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

a. Problem Framing Step. This is the first step of the MCPP; it drives the process.



(1) Problem Framing. The purpose of Problem Framing is to enhance the commander's understanding of the operational environment and nature of the problem in order to determine the purpose of the operation (identifying "what" must be accomplished and most importantly why). Problem Framing is viewed as the most important step of the MCPP. This step affects the entire decision-making process, if inadequate; everything done in subsequent steps may not address the root cause of the problem.

(2) CMO Support to Problem Framing. CMO Planners define the nature of the problem from a CMO perspective. The Civil Preparation of the Battlespace (CPB) is essential to the overall assessment of the operational environment and the impact of friendly, adversary, and other actors on the commander's ability to devise a practical solution. CMO Planners must be able to analyze the operational environment and identify related CMO assets and capabilities that can be used in support of planning and execution.

b. Course of Action Development Step. During this step planners develop possible solution to solve a given problem.

(1) The purpose of COA Development is to produce option(s) for accomplishing the mission in accordance with commander's intent. Planners will provide an understanding of the operational environment and the approach to solve the given problem. Each prospective COA is examined to ensure that it is feasible, acceptable, suitable, distinguishable, and complete (FASDC). Keep in mind that the operational environment is influenced by adversary and civil actions, government, and nature (weather and terrain); therefore continuous assessment is important.

(2) The "how" is the essence of COA development.

(3) CMO Planners develop CMO products in support of the OPT's COA(s) development: Most Likely/Most Disadvantageous civil actions; CMO requirements and resources; CMO Task organization; CMO Graphic and Narrative; and a Civil Information Management plan (this is not a complete list).

c. COA War Game Step. During this step planners are critically examining each COA in order to provide the commander with the best option to accomplish the mission.

(1) The purpose of COA War Game is to examine and refine the option(s) in light of adversary and civil capabilities and potential actions/reactions to include their effect on the operating environment. Each friendly COA is wargamed against selected adversary/civil COAs. Short of actually executing the COA, COA war game provides the most reliable basis for understanding and improving each COA. Wargaming friendly COAs helps planners:

(a) Validate each COA (FASDC).

(b) Identify strengths and weaknesses, associated risks, and assess shortfalls for each friendly course of action.

(c) Contributes to an enhance understanding of the operational environment and the nature of the problem.

(d) Identify branches and sequels.

(2) The Green Cell is used to assist the Commander in analyzing COAs from the civil prospective.

(3) The Red Cell is used to assist the Commander in analyzing each COA(s) against a thinking adversary.

d. **COA Comparison and Decision Step.** During this step the Commander then selects the COA that he believes will best accomplish the mission. This step is commonly known as the Commander's step.

(1) The purpose of COA Comparison and Decision is to facilitate the Commander's review of the pros and cons of each option(s) and to decide on the right solution (course of action) that will best accomplish the mission. During COA Comparison and Decision each friendly COA is evaluated against the commander's established evaluation criteria and the commander compares them against one another using the results of the COA evaluation.

(2) The Commander has options in selecting the appropriate COA: Choose selected COA; modify selected COA; Combine COAs; or start over (not a likely decision, but possible). The commander's selected COA becomes the basis of the CONOPS.

(3) CMO Planners will finalized their CMO staff estimate and provide input for the Warning Order.

e. **Orders Development Step.** During this step, the Commander's decision is communicated in a form that directs unit actions and can be understood by those executing the tasks and activities necessary to accomplish the mission.

(1) The purpose of Orders Development is to translate the commander's decision into oral, written, and or graphic communication that directs unit actions. Orders serve as the principal means by which the Commander expresses his decision, intent, and guidance.

(2) Orders/Plan should be:

(a) Communicated in a clear, concise, and useful form that can be understood by those executing the order.

(b) Contain only critical information and not routine matters normally found in SOPs.

(c) Approved by the Commander.

(3) CMO Planners are responsible for: CMO Concept of Support, Annex G: CMO, and identifying implied CMO tasks.

(4) CMO Planners should participate in orders reconciliation and orders crosswalk.

f. **Transition Step.** Transition is the final step of the Marine Corps Planning Process. This step facilitates a shift from planning to execution.

(1) The purpose of transition is to ensure a successful shift from planning to execution. It is an orderly handover and explanation of the approved order to those who will execute the order. Essential to transition is an approved order because it contains the mission, commander's intent and all necessary planning support tools. Transition is designed to promote an understanding of the written order/plan by those responsible for executing the order/plan.

(2) Transition may include briefs, drills, rehearsals, or a relocation of a planner to the COP for execution.

(3) Transition is a continuous process that requires a free flow of information between commanders and staffs by all available means.

(4) CMO Planners must ensure that there is a transition of the CMO activities to those executing the CMO tasks outlined in the order/plan.

MCPP	NPP	MDMP	JTF	JOPES Crisis Action Planning
PROBLEM FRAMING	MISSION ANALYSIS	RECEIPT OF MISSION	MISSION ANALYSIS	SITUATION DEVELOPMENT
COA DEVELOPMENT	COA DEVELOPMENT	MISSION ANALYSIS	PLANNING GUIDANCE	CRISIS ASSESSMENT
COA WAR GAME	COA ANALYSIS	COA DEVELOPMENT	COA DEVELOPMENT	COA DEVELOPMENT
COA COMPARISON / DECISION	COA COMPARISON / DECISION	COA ANALYSIS	COA ANALYSIS	
		COA COMPARISON	COA COMPARISON	
ORDERS DEVELOPMENT	PLANS & ORDERS DEVELOPMENT	COA APPROVAL	COA SELECTION	COA SELECTION
TRANSITION	TRANSITION	ORDERS PRODUCTION	ORDERS PRODUCTION	EXECUTION PLANNING
				EXECUTION

g. **Planning Process Comparison.** Although there may be minor differences between processes, such as the title of the step or where a particular activity is conducted within the process, overall they are the same. The bottom line, if you know and understand MCPP you will be able to easily learn the other DOD planning processes.

REFERENCES:

MCWP 3-33.1 MAGTF Civil Military Operations
MCWP 5-1 Marine Corps Planning Process

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